

Compte rendu

Ouvrage recensé :

BONNERJEA, René, 2004 *Eskimos in Europe: How they got there and what happened to them afterwards*, London and Budapest, Biro Family Ltd., 470 pages. [Order from rene@bonnerjea.fslife.co.uk.]

par H. G. Jones

Études/Inuit/Studies, vol. 30, n° 1, 2006, p. 184-186.

Pour citer ce compte rendu, utiliser l'adresse suivante :

URI: <http://id.erudit.org/iderudit/016157ar>

DOI: 10.7202/016157ar

Note : les règles d'écriture des références bibliographiques peuvent varier selon les différents domaines du savoir.

Ce document est protégé par la loi sur le droit d'auteur. L'utilisation des services d'Érudit (y compris la reproduction) est assujettie à sa politique d'utilisation que vous pouvez consulter à l'URI <https://apropos.erudit.org/fr/usagers/politique-dutilisation/>

Érudit est un consortium interuniversitaire sans but lucratif composé de l'Université de Montréal, l'Université Laval et l'Université du Québec à Montréal. Il a pour mission la promotion et la valorisation de la recherche. Érudit offre des services d'édition numérique de documents scientifiques depuis 1998.

Pour communiquer avec les responsables d'Érudit : info@erudit.org

artfully drawn by the author who references, but does not dwell, on the past. History percolates up into the discussion and supports the essays giving them depth without overshadowing the focus on life today in the Pass. This is both good writing and solid ethnography.

This book may be one of the best ways to introduce students to anthropology because it gives a first hand look and feel on many aspects of the fieldwork experience in the 21st century. The tone is respectful, considerate of the villagers' privacy, and it is frank and honest about ups and downs of this type of work.

There are several minor things about the essays that I question, and could easily be rectified in a next edition. The book needs an index so we can easily find reference to people, dates, and events. In several places, Blackman repeats explanations or descriptions from earlier essays; reference to the first mention would provide a graceful connection and remind us of the context under consideration. Some essays are more compelling than others. For instance, "The Things we carry," which chronicles her semester teaching at the University of Alaska Fairbanks, seems distant from the subject, but could provide contrast to the next essay, "Town," which deals with people coming to town from the village, the frenzy of activities, appointments, and shopping. Blackman's semester long trip was for very different reasons and the needs she describes are also quite different from the needs of villagers who come to town. This contrast could make for good comparison, but in its present form, it is more implicit than explicit, by virtue of its placement before "Town" and her reference to the nomadic Nunamiut and what they carried.

Finally, there is "Ed's Place," an explanation and description of how her marriage disintegrated. Could she, should she, have written this differently? Her partnership with her husband is intertwined with their fieldwork and is part of the history of anthropological research in the Pass. As readers, we want to know how and why this partnership dissolved and its impact on the author and her work, but I question the level of detail; it seems intrusive on the lives of other family members whose story is now in print.

William Schneider
Elmer Rasmuson Library
University of Alaska Fairbanks
Fairbanks 99775-6800
Alaska, USA
ffwss@uaf.edu

BONNERJEA, René

2004 *Eskimos in Europe: How they got there and what happened to them afterwards*, London and Budapest, Biro Family Ltd., 470 pages. [Order from rene@bonnerjea.fslife.co.uk.]

A third of a century ago, a historian of the American South became fascinated with the North and has since travelled to the Arctic nearly 50 times to study the Inuit people and their culture. Of particular interest to him were Inuit who were taken to Europe, and he read papers on the subject at the Inuit Studies Conference, the International Congress of Arctic Social Sciences, and other scholarly meetings. Two of the papers were published (Jones 2002, 2004).

Meanwhile, unaware of the North Carolinian's research, a poet/linguist living in London became similarly interested and, finding no book on the subject, privately published *Eskimos in Europe: how they got there and what happened to them afterwards*. The author, who has never visited the Arctic (Bonnerjea, pers. com. 2005), scoured European publications, visited various repositories, took copious notes, and produced a useful narrative. The mutual interest of the author and reviewer was discovered through the Internet, another example of the value of technology in historical research.

Eskimos in Europe traces a procession of Inuit who were taken, involuntarily or with their consent, to European countries from 1566 through the 19th century. Included are the familiar stories of Frobisher's captives of the 1570s; Mikak and other Labradorians; Eenoolooapik and his sister Tookoolito from Baffin; and Sakeouse and other Greenlanders. Most poignant are the descriptions of these and dozens of other aboriginals in a foreign land where, like exotic animals, they were exhibited to curious audiences speaking in an unintelligible tongue, eating unpalatable foods, and wearing strange clothing in a suffocating climate. Laboriously, Bonnerjea follows the transients; sadly, most of them died in a foreign land, and the fate of many remains unrecorded.

The author presents a vast amount of information gathered from a staggering variety of sources, mostly European in origin, some of which will not be familiar to researchers who limit their reading to English-language materials. Although there is no separate bibliography, a perusal of the chapter notes reveals the breadth and richness of the author's search for myriad threads referencing the subject. Thus measured, this is an enormously valuable book.

It is also a book that "chases rabbits"—that is, the story often veers off the subject. For example, Tookoolito and Ebierbing, long after their return from Europe, are followed in great detail while serving Charles Francis Hall in the messianic American's efforts to solve the mystery of the Franklin expedition. To be sure, detours add interesting nuggets, some of them significant and seldom detected in more orthodox narratives. Examples: Bonnerjea departs from the story to discuss rival claims of John Ross and his lieutenant, Edward Sabine, over the word *amaroq* (pp. 194 ff.); the correct spelling and linguistic origin of the name "Sakeouse" (p. 202); the reintroduction of the art of *qajaq*-building to the Polar Eskimos (p. 189); and an Inuk's amusement as low-ranked sailors pulled sleds carrying English officers (p. 185), his reaction on his first sight of a monkey (p. 157), and his surprise at seeing a Qallunaaq skating on ice (p. 152). The author/linguist takes special interest in the "Eskimo dictionaries" compiled during the Frobisher and Davis expeditions (p. 66). He also makes several references to

the Inuit practice of “head lifting” (e.g., p. 154), and he repeats the gnarled myth of “Finn-Men” in Scotland (pp. 373 ff.).

A unique value of *Eskimos in Europe* is its photographic reproduction of selected documents in their original language. Examples: excerpts (in both manuscript and printed form) from the *Chronicles of Bristol* reporting the arrival in 1577 of Frobisher’s captives Callicho and Ignorth (pp. 58, 60); Dr. Doddington’s three-page medical report (in Latin) on the Eskimos (pp. 67-69) and their death registration in Bristol (p. 73); four 1724 views relating to Greenlanders Poq and Qiperoq in Copenhagen (pp. 128-131); a notice in *The Edinburgh Evening Courant* of the arrival of Sakeouse in Leith in 1816 (p. 172); a map of Tenudiakbeek Gulf (Cumberland Sound) based on the original drawn by Eeneelooapik in 1839 (p. 206); the court calendar of 3 February 1854 announcing the visit of Tookoolito, Ebierbing, and Harkalachjoe with Queen Victoria (p. 248); *Yorkshire Gazette* articles of 1854 reporting the trio’s appearance in Driffield and York (pp. 251-253); and 1824 German newspaper accounts of the exhibition of Captain Samuel Hadlock’s “Eskimo Indians” in Germany and Austria (pp. 339, 347). While several of these accounts have been reprinted in other publications, they add visual interest in their original appearance.

The book is not without editing and proofreading problems, for misspellings appear and names are written inconsistently—the latter perhaps an inescapable irritant due to the variety of spellings found in disparate sources. *Eskimos in Europe*, therefore, should be used by scholars on its merits—as the product of an amateur historian who has devoted years to researching and telling the stories of several dozen Inuit who were taken to Europe from present-day Canada and Greenland and who became, often unwillingly, “explorers in reverse.”

References

JONES, H. G.

- 2002 Teaching the explorers: Some Inuit contributions to Arctic discoveries, *Polar Geography*, 26(1): 4-20.
- 2004 The Inuit as geographers: The case of Eeenoolooapik, *Études/Inuit/Studies*, 28(2): 57-72.

H. G. Jones
University of North Carolina
P.O. Box 127
Chapel Hill, North Carolina 27514-0127
USA
hgjones@email.unc.edu